

FINAL BILL REPORT

HB 1668

PARTIAL VETO

C 282 L 05

Synopsis as Enacted

Brief Description: Changing provisions relating to the administrative office of the courts.

Sponsors: By Representatives Lantz and Priest; by request of Board For Judicial Administration.

House Committee on Judiciary

Senate Committee on Judiciary

Background:

The Administrator for the Courts (administrator) is appointed by the Washington Supreme Court from a list of five persons submitted by the Governor. The administrator is charged with administering various aspects of the state court system, such as fostering court efficiency, training personnel, designing forms, developing standards, and controlling costs. Neither the administrator nor assistants may practice law during their tenure with the Office of the Administrator for the Courts. In addition, the administrator may not be over the age of 60 when appointed to office.

One of the duties of the administrator is to examine the need for new superior court and district court judicial positions. The administrator must use a weighted caseload analysis that takes into account the time required to hear all the cases in a particular court and the amount of time existing judges have available to hear cases in that court. In 2002, the Legislature changed the method for determining the need for new district court judges from the weighted caseload analysis to an "objective workload analysis," but did not enact this change with respect to superior court judge positions. The objective workload analysis takes into consideration the available judicial resources and caseload activity of each court.

In 2000, the Board for Judicial Administration formed the Project 2001 Committee to study and make recommendations on ways to improve the operation of the courts. The final report of the Project 2001 Committee calls on the Board for Judicial Administration to promote the establishment of court coordination councils in each jurisdiction, to be composed of trial court judges, clerks, court administrators, lawyers, citizens, and other local officials. The councils are to work toward maximum utilization of judicial and other court resources by first developing and then implementing comprehensive trial court coordination plans.

Summary:

A variety of changes are made with respect to the Office of the Administrator for the Courts relating to the office's functions and duties.

The name of the Office of the Administrator for the Courts is changed to the Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC). References throughout the code are changed to reflect the name change.

The requirement that the Administrator for the Courts be appointed from a list of five persons submitted by the Governor is removed so that the administrator is simply appointed by the Supreme Court. In addition, the requirement that the administrator not be over 60 years old at the time of appointment is removed. The administrator and his or her assistants are authorized to practice law to provide pro bono legal services and legal services to family members, as long as the legal services do not interfere with official duties.

The weighted caseload analysis that is used by the administrator to examine the need for new superior court judicial positions is replaced with an "objective workload analysis."

The duties of the administrator are amended to include using state funds to improve the operation of the courts and providing support for court coordinating councils.

Votes on Final Passage:

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| House | 90 | 0 |
| Senate | 39 | 0 |

Effective: July 24, 2005

Partial Veto Summary: The Governor vetoed a section of the bill that changed the reference to the Office of the Administrator for the Courts to the Administrative Office of the Courts. This section became unnecessary with the passage of E2SHB 2015, which deleted the language being amended in the vetoed section.